



TRUTH APPLICATIONS

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Before You Fight a Giant, You've Got to Kill a Bear

David Anguish

Nine feet tall. A warrior so fierce that hardened battle veterans trembled before him. Forty days of jeers and still no challengers. Goliath. The vicious soldier cut down in his prime by a shepherd boy. He lost the duel. His people lost the battle. And the career of Israel's greatest king had begun.

It's all in 1 Samuel 17. How David was sent to deliver a care package to his three brothers. How he heard Goliath's insults and wondered aloud at the failure of Israel's army to respond. How his brothers told him to mind his own business even as King Saul heard of David's words and summoned him. How he volunteered for hazardous duty, and then refused the finest weapon and armor available. How with five stones and a sling he alone whipped the man who had singlehandedly held Israel at bay for more than a month. How the Israelite army then routed the Philistines in one of the most lopsided victories in Israel's history. How David delivered to Saul the head of Goliath, severed with the giant's own sword.

What boldness! What courage! What faith!

And what an impossible example for us to follow. That is, until we look deeper into the story and see the nature of David's faith. Do not misunderstand: he *was* a hero. His stature may have been slight, but his faith was mountainous. But it was not the instant-success kind of faith that often comes across when the story is told. If David's faith was advanced for his few years, it was because he had faced tougher circumstances than most. His faith did not develop overnight. And therein lies the true value of his example.

The key is in 1 Samuel 17:34-37. Discouraged by King Saul from his determination to fight, David told him about things he had encountered as a shepherd. His lack of battlefield experience was alleviated by time spent on the front lines of life. He told Saul about the times he had rescued a lamb from a lion, or a bear. And then he told him the powerful truth he had learned: "The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine" (v. 37).

David knew, first, that victory was not in his hands, but the LORD'S. He knew what those around him saw when they looked at him—probably better than they did. He was young. He did lack experience in war. And he knew that wearing a man's armor did not turn a boy into a soldier. But David also saw what the others on the field had forgotten. A world existed outside the valley they had been looking at for weeks. It was a world where God was in charge, where God helped faithful people win battles.

Second, David knew that the battles he had already fought had prepared him for this one. They were not disconnected events, but part of the training he needed for harder battles yet to come. In winning the victories he had also gained confidence. Conviction about God. Assurance of his abilities when he surrendered them to God. Determination to never let God down. Poise in the face of a bigger threat.

From David we learn what it means to stand for God in the hardest times. But we also learn that life is made up of many battles that come in different sizes. Having a strong faith does not always mean taking on the biggest foes. But it does mean trusting God as we take on whatever foes we face. It also means learning that every battle contributes to our spiritual growth, that every triumph is a victory for God.

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